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NEWS RELEASE

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MADISON COUNTY BENEFITS FROM \$17.6 MILLION DOLLAR INVESTMENT FROM THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH & WELFARE

Last year, Madison County residents and businesses received \$17.6 million from Department of Health & Welfare programs that help people in need. The investment benefits every one of the county's 30,000 residents. Of Idaho's 44 counties, Madison County ranks number 37 in per capita outlay of Health & Welfare dollars.

The disbursement of state and federal tax dollars amounts to \$587 for every man, woman and child residing in Madison County. This includes citizens who may not receive a single direct service from the Department. The statewide average is \$839 per capita.

The Department distributed \$1.15 billion in Idaho communities in 2004. These funds came from Medicaid, additional payments to hospitals, Food Stamps, the Idaho Child Care Program, the Women, Infants and Children nutritional program, foster care and a variety of other assistance programs.

"This is an investment for all Madison County residents," says Health & Welfare Director Karl Kurtz. "These are tax dollars put to good use because they are used to help people become healthy and productive. This money goes go to foster care for children in crisis, substance abuse treatment for adults and adolescents, improvements and operations at local hospitals, and dozens of other badly needed services."

“This is as much about sustaining communities as it is investing,” adds Kurtz. “By providing programs that support people, we are helping communities and their residents build the endurance and strength they need to remain vital. Everyone profits from this investment, not just those who use Department programs. This isn’t just me pounding my chest. That’s what community leaders tell us.”

“(Money from the Department) is absolutely an investment in our county, and I believe it creates jobs,” says Madison County Commission Chairman Roger Muir. “There’s a lot of kids in our WIC (Women, Infant, Children nutrition) program. It’s important because it helps keeps kids healthy. We deal with a lot of people who come to our indigent program, so without Medicaid there would be a lot more.”

Last year, the Department’s Medicaid Division spent \$14 million on health care for residents of the county. A large share of the dollars went to Madison Memorial Hospital. The hospital also received \$688,000 in extra payments called Federal Upper Payment Limits and Disproportionate Share. These programs compensate hospitals for low Medicaid reimbursement. The extra money can be used for any purpose so anyone using the hospital can potentially benefit from those dollars. All Medicaid payments to the hospital totaled \$4.2 million.

“This money is becoming more important to us,” says Hospital Administrator Keith Steiner. “The FUPL and DSH are very important in helping us buy equipment. We had to upgrade our CT scan, so much of that money goes into a dedicated fund for that purpose. We’re also looking at a \$42 million expansion, so this extra money is critical. It helps us operationally too.”

Madison County residents received \$1.2 million in Food Stamps to help feed their families — \$400,000 more than in 2003. The Food Stamp program served 1,170 people in 2004 — 400 more than in the previous year. Local grocers saw \$829,000 of the Food Stamp dollars in their stores, including \$436,200 at Broulim’s Supermarket. Store Director Dennis Jordan calls those dollars “very, very important.”

He has 160 employees, and the money allows him to create more jobs. If the money wasn’t there, “We would have less jobs. It probably would not affect our product line, but we would have to do something different with our inventory.”

Department spending helps people, and it has an upside for business, according to Idaho economist John Church. “This is not lost money. The spending is an investment. It goes back into the economy. If an employer came to town and spent this much money we would be elated. People need to remember that a big chunk of this is federal money which is a huge return on our taxes. This comes back and helps stimulate the economy and it helps people.”

Kurtz says, “Not only is the Department money a human investment, but it creates jobs and maintains healthy businesses. These dollars recycle numerous times in each community and help us keep the high quality of life we enjoy in Idaho. This is a wise use of taxpayer dollars because the money spent in the community often stays in the community. The dollars are spent again and again to help create jobs and an infrastructure that provides healthy and safe neighborhoods.”

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(**Editors:** Interviews are available on request. Contact Ross Mason at 334-0693 or Regional Director Tracey Sessions at 528-5791 for more information.)

**More information on Health & Welfare’s
investment in every Idaho County
can be found online at
<http://www.healthandwelfare.idaho.gov>**